

Rev. Joseph B. Thompson, D.D.

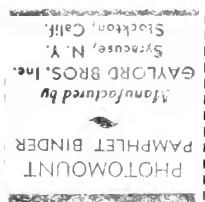
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Tabernacle Church  
Its History and Work

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BROADWAY

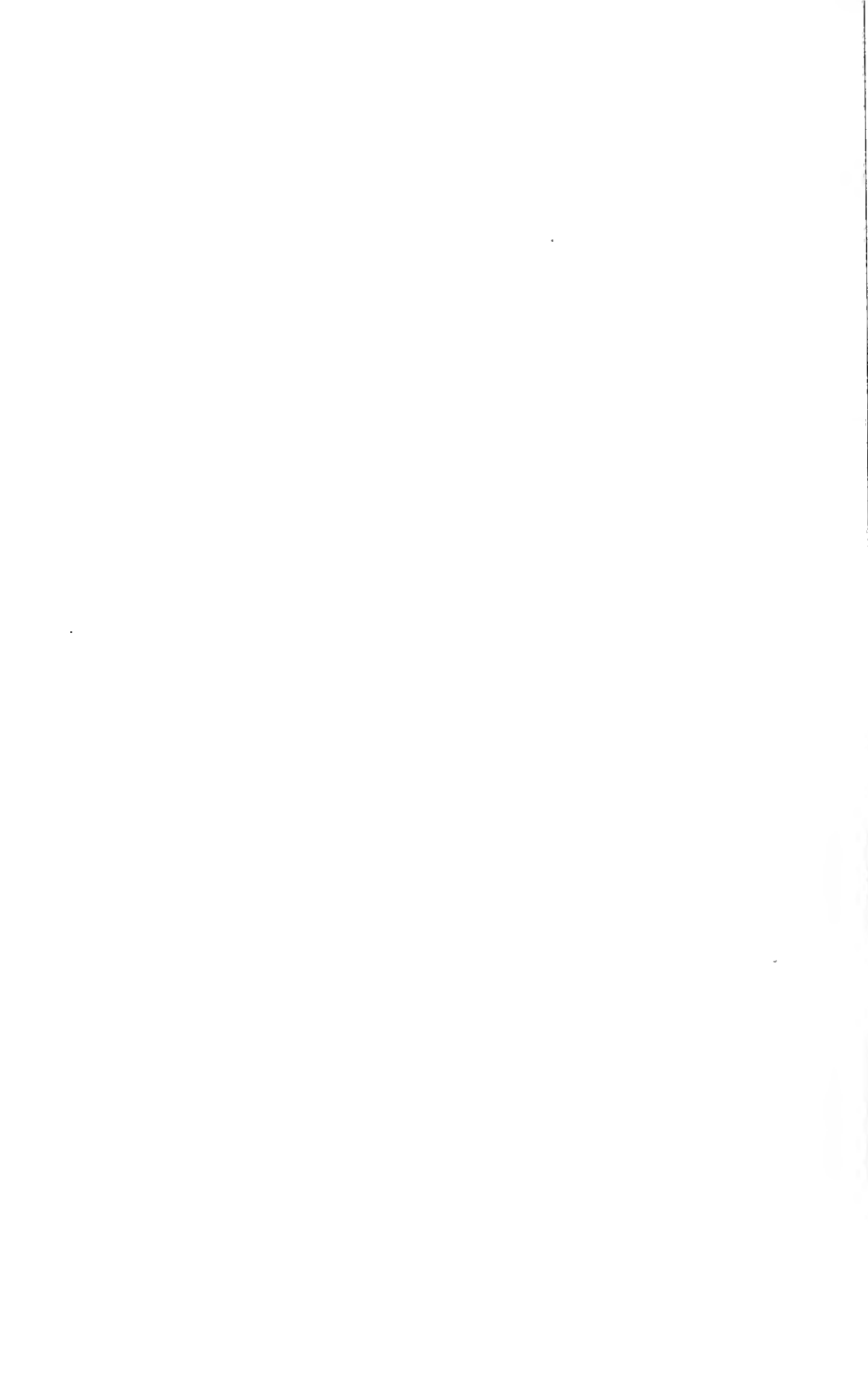
TABERNACLE CHURCH:

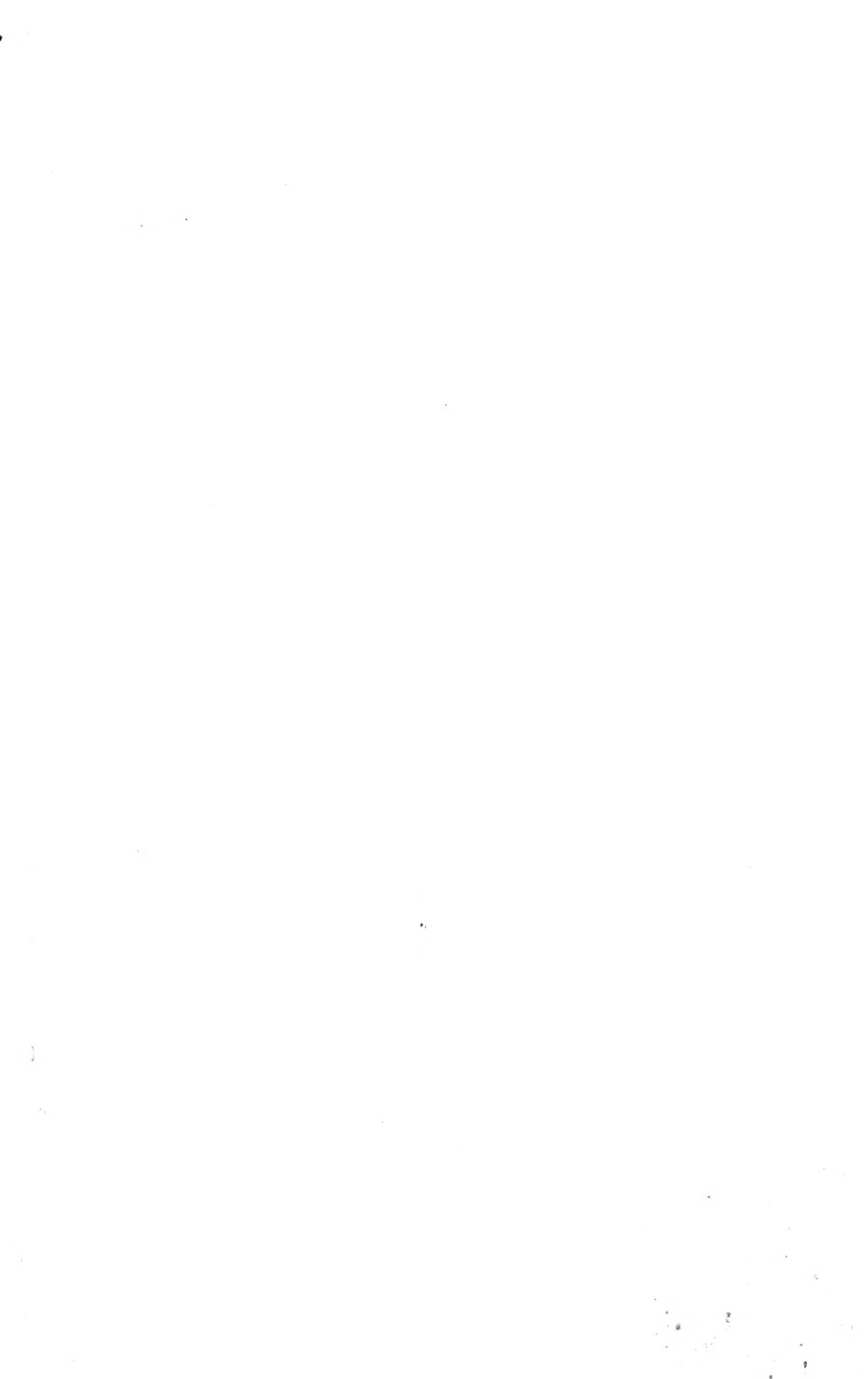
ITS HISTORY AND WORK ;

WITH THE DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE RESIGNATION  
OF ITS PASTOR,

REV. JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, D. D.

NEW YORK.  
1871.







BROADWAY

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ANNOUNCEMENT  
OF  
RESIGNATION.

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On the morning of Sabbath, October 22d, 1871, the pastor made to the congregation the following announcement :

In fulfillment of a purpose formed some time ago, for a reason strictly personal, which at that time was conclusive to my own mind, and which has since become imperative, I do now resign the office of pastor in this church, which I have held for more than twenty-six years. I shall request the church, at its meeting on the 1st of November next, to unite with me in calling a Council for the dissolution of the pastoral relation. But it would not be proper to keep the congregation in suspense until that time ; and I therefore affectionately invite all persons who are stated attendants upon my ministry, members of the congregation as well as of the church, to come together in an informal manner, to-morrow evening at 8 o'clock, in the chapel ; when, in the confidence of a family gathering, I will state the cause which has compelled me to this step, and which at the same time compels my retirement from every form of public office and responsibility. In making this announcement, from a decided though painful conviction of duty, I throw myself upon that indulgent regard with which this people of my love have always favored me.

Having announced his resignation, the pastor preached the following sermon.



## SERMON.

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LUKE ii., 29, 30. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

Depart we must. Depart, it may be, like Abraham from home, kindred, country,—going forth into a strange land, “not knowing whither he went.” Depart, it may be, like Moses, from position, influence, honors, hopes,—to go out alone into the wilderness. Depart, it may be, like Paul from his beloved church at Ephesus, with prayers and tears and sorrow of heart, obeying the voice of Providence, not knowing what should befall him, save that afflictions awaited him wherever he should go. Depart we must, at length, every one of us, upon that solitary journey from which “he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.” All human utterances, in language and in art, the strains of poetry and of music, have gathered sadness around the thought of parting; and one of the most blissful hopes of heaven is that there we shall meet to part no more.

Yet it is possible that parting should bring with it only peace. The realization of God’s will in the act itself; the consummation of God’s purpose in the events that have led to it, or have made it necessary; the assurance that God will accomplish the work of salvation in him who goes and in those who remain,—will make the parting peaceful in itself, and cause it to open the way to a peace ineffable and everlasting. He who identifies his life with the kingdom of God, when called to go anywhere, in the world or out of it, shall depart in peace.

It was this that imparted such exquisite serenity to the last days of Simeon. His years admonished him that the end of life was near ; but he had one great hope to live for—that he might see the Lord's Christ ; and when he took the babe in his arms, the gates of heaven opened, that he could depart in peace. How beautiful the old age of piety !—the faith and devotion that through a long life have waited upon God merging into the peace of Christ's coming and the joy of the heavenly rest : no fears, no anxieties, no cares, no doubts, but a trust in God so calm and full that even death is waited for in holy expectation as the consolation promised to Israel, as the longed-for vision of Christ ! This rich peace in prospect of death comes of a life of faith—"just and devout"—according to the word of God. A holy life is the prelude of a happy death.

But the aged saint is not simply waiting for his departure : he is not severed from the present and translated beforehand into the future. Sometimes such an one fancies that because his days of activity are over he has outlived his usefulness ; but his life of patience and hope, his mature and serene piety, his devout waiting upon God, are a continual argument for the gospel. He brings forth fruit in old age. The cedar with the growth of centuries upon it still flourishes in majestic beauty. "The palm-tree remains green all the year round ; in the cold of winter no less than in the heat of summer. It grows slowly, but steadily, uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. Drawing its moisture from hidden springs, when the green of the meadows is withered, and the earth is parched to powder, the palm-tree still lifts aloft its verdant roof of leaves." The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree. Thus vigorous and refreshing was the piety of the aged Simeon, as, amid the unbelief and deadness of his times, he prayed and waited for the consolation of Israel. But his hope and joy were not for himself alone. He longed and prayed for the salvation of the world—a salvation which, coming with a peculiar glory to his own beloved nation, should also lighten the Gentiles and shine upon the face of all people.

He who would keep his own heart fresh, his own piety glowing, should carry in his heart and remember in his prayers the

welfare of the whole world. Thus loving and praying, he can never grow old, never be weary, never really die ; for he is identified with that which is undying and sure. To live is to be the Lord's, and to depart is peace ; for this is to be with Christ, which is far better. There are two things that a good man longs for as he goes on in years—the assurance of a godly posterity, and some token of the salvation of the Lord ; and these longings were satisfied to this patient saint.

Who Simeon was—what was his occupation, what was his social standing, what office he held, how much he was worth when he died—such items as these that men make so much of, and by which they estimate one another, are all left out of the Bible story. The one thing that gave Simeon a name and a place in this story was his devout longing and hope for his nation and the world through the coming of Christ. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant ;” and Simeon had so completely identified his life with that spiritual kingdom which Isaiah and other prophets had foretold, that the Lord took him, as it were, into his purposes ; and by the Holy Spirit assured him that “he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ.” We know not that Simeon had children of his own ; but he adopted this Christ-child as the child of his prayer ; and, waiting, he beheld in him the seed of faith, the posterity of righteous souls, the hope of coming generations,—above all, the Restorer of the kingdom of holiness, the Redeemer of the world. And seeing this, he could depart without one unsatisfied desire. His words were not a prayer for release from life, but the grateful, adoring acknowledgment that life was ended in peace, by the filling-out of its one great hope. He who lives in and for the salvation of God is ready always to accept the changes that God appoints, and to depart in peace.

I. He who lives to God knows that, to that extent, his life is not in vain. Small, indeed, is the showing that most men can make of the value of their lives, as reckoned upon what they themselves have done or produced for the use and benefit of mankind. Here and there an inventor, a discoverer, a poet, a philanthropist, a statesman, a general, a reformer—the rare man of

the centuries—is permitted, while yet living, to measure the good his life has conferred upon the world. But how small a space in history or in affairs does any one life fill ! How do numbers compress the individual ! how do events dwarf his deeds ! The weekly village newspaper may devote three columns to an obituary of the village squire, doctor, or deacon ; but, in the crowded columns of the city press, a Gasparin, a Grote, a Humboldt is dismissed with thirty lines—most men with three, and paid for at that ! And so the thoughtful, modest man will ask himself : Of what account is my life to the world ? What have I done that I shall be remembered by when I am gone ? What am I, that I should be missed when I am gone ! Had I enjoyed such or such opportunities of education, position, fortune, or had I better understood how to improve the occasions brought within my reach, I might have done something worth living for ; but life, as I look back upon it, has been pretty much in vain ! And life is in vain—it may be worse than in vain—except as it is linked to that which lives.

But when the individual merges himself in that *Redemption of Humanity* for which Christ lived and died, when what he lives for is not to make himself a name, but to make known the name of Christ, and to bring glory to that name ; then does his life partake of the life-power, which is incorruptible and immortal. He can no more live in vain than Christ lived in vain, than God lives in vain. He may not be able to gather in the fruits of his life : but none of them shall fail, and the great Harvester will gather them in due time. With the humility of a true disciple he may count his sphere one of lowly service ; but though he die, his works shall follow him. “Good old Simeon” was, perhaps, the highest epithet that aged Jew had won in his own narrow circle ; but he put himself in the line of God’s salvation in Christ ; and behold, his name is storied in the Gospel, it is hymned in the praises of the Church, it is wrought upon the canvas of the great masters, surrounded with the halo of Christ’s coming ; it is wreathed into crowns of peace and hope over the dying-bed of the aged pilgrim.

II. He who lives unto God can depart in peace, since he knows that the future of the world will be the brighter because

of his prayers and toils ; and that the cause he loves, and has lived for, will not die. The man who plants an acorn hardly expects to see the full-grown oak, but he has faith in the laws of nature, and provides shade and beauty, and eventually builds ships and houses for other generations. No man can feel sure that the firm he establishes, the house he builds, the bank he creates, the government or dynasty he founds, shall stand for fifty years ; for he who builds upon human calculations, with human elements, for human interests, builds with uncertain and perishable materials. But he who works in the line of nature's laws, works with agencies as lasting as time. He knows that sun and air and rain will work on without ceasing, year in and year out ; that the silent forces which, for so many hundred years,—while generations and races of men have come and gone,—have pumped up the sap to the topmost leaves of the big trees of California, and of the cedars of Lebanon,—these silent forces will never tire of their work, will never be overcome by gravity, nor killed by winter ; but when decay shall undermine one of their living structures, they will forthwith build up another from its roots, or at its side, and so perpetuate the life of vegetation, world without end. And so in the moral world ; he who works with God's laws and for God's ends, links his life with that which cannot die. His prayers and toils and tears may seem “as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again ;” but these are the silent forces that enter into the growth of that tree of life whose “leaves are for the healing of the nations.” For Christ associates our prayers with his providential purposes, and gathers our toils and tears into his eternal triumphs. That which you see accomplished may be small to human vices ; that which you rest your hope upon may seem most feeble and unpromising to the wisdom of this world : but if it be of God and for God, its future is sure.

There came into the temple a poor woman, the wife of a village carpenter, fresh from the manger where she had cradled her babe,—too poor to bring the lamb appointed for sacrifice ; yet the faith of Simeon discerned in this child of poverty the light that should lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. In him he beheld all prophecy fulfilled, all promise made sure, the

redemption of the world, the salvation of God. And thus seeing and believing, he could depart in peace.

So of whatever work you begin in the spirit of Christ and to the glory of his name. The church you organize, the mission you start, the Christian school you found, the charity you endow, may be small and unpromising in its beginning ; but if the spirit of Christ is in it, this little nursling in your arms shall be a very Christ-child from which shall radiate the promise of salvation for the world, and the benediction of peace for your departure.

III. He who lives for God can depart in peace at any time and any whither, because he knows that the time appointed of God for his departure is the best. He who had kept the ages waiting for his promise, in the fullness of time, brought his Christ into his temple. He who through long years of disappointment kept Simeon waiting in prayer and faith for the consolation of Israel, at last brought salvation to his eyes that he might depart in peace. God knows best where to place us, how to use us, when to take us away. "My times are in thy hand; the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Wherever God appoints us to be, he has work for us to do ; and to feel that we are doing God's will and work is life, is peace, is joy. There is no such perfect freedom as this service of God ; no such independence as that of depending only upon him ; no such imperturbable peace as comes of inaugurating his will over all our wishes, works, and ways. Under his lead we shall always be in the right place, shall always take the right step, shall always do the right thing. So long as God has any work for us to do in this world, he will show us where to find it, and will provide the means for doing it ; and when he has no longer any work for us here, what boundless spheres of activity will be opened to the faithful servant, without the cost and the incumbrance of "this earthly."

The changes that God appoints are always the best for us ; and knowing this, we can always depart in peace. It is natural that we should wish to finish our work to our own mind. But how often does God teach us that to quit our work is to complete it ! How often does death in the household quicken sur-



vivors into life ! how often does the going-away of a pastor bring forward to the harvest the seed for whose appearing he had waited long ! “ Another reapeth and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; but both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall in the end rejoice together.”

IV. He who lives unto God can depart this life in peace, for he knows that he shall enter into blessedness ; for we do know that “ If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens : we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Yea, sometimes we even have “ a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

How many such departures have I been privileged to witness as a testimony to “ the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” to the certainty of its promised peace ! The men of faith who founded this church and nursed its infancy ; the men who, in later years, ministered to its material and spiritual prosperity, its Sunday schools, its mission-work, its charities, at home and abroad—how many of these dear brethren have I seen depart in the blessed peace of Christ!—and of godly women not a few. Above this visible congregation, I feel myself surrounded by that congregation of the blest, whose invisible presence fills all the air with peace. You know that wondrous painting of the Presentation in the Temple, where all the picture is in shadow, but a glory beaming from the face of the infant Jesus covers Simeon with light, and is driving the darkness away. So when the believer in Christ, loving, trusting, serving, obeying, is summoned to depart, as he enters the gates of death, he seems to us to pass into shadow—the darkness thickens on the hither side ; but this is only the setting of the picture. Before him is light ; his face turned heavenward beams with the glory of Christ ; no longer the radiant infant of the Temple, yet the same Jesus glorified, enthroned in that Jerusalem where “ the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” O Lord Jesus, as I lay down this life-work at thy feet, and when I shall lay down life itself at thy bidding, grant me that vision of thy face, and let thy servant depart in peace.

MINUTES OF AN INFORMAL MEETING  
OF THE  
Members of the Broadway Tabernacle Church and Society,

HELD IN THE CHAPEL,

*On Monday Evening, October 23d, 1871.*

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The meeting was organized by the election of Mr. Marshall O. Roberts, Chairman. Leonard Hazeltine, Jr., Secretary.

Prayer was offered by Deacon Henry Whittelsey.

The meeting was called to receive a statement from Dr. Thompson of his reasons for the resignation of his pastorate, which he had announced from the pulpit on the preceding Sabbath morning.

Dr. Thompson addressed the meeting, giving fully the reasons which compelled him to seek relief from his duties as pastor, and read the following letter of resignation, which he requested should be presented to the church at their next business meeting in November.

*“To the Broadway Tabernacle Church :*

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS IN THE LORD—The office of pastor in this church, which I have held for nearly twenty-seven years, I now resign into your hands ; and I request you to unite with me in calling a council to conclude the dissolution of this relation.

Sudden as this announcement may be to you, with me this is no sudden decision. More than three years ago, a physical

infirmity, induced by exposure in the army, and in its nature beyond remedy, had become so aggravated and so complicated, that the highest medical authority ordered me to withdraw from the pressure of public responsibilities, if I would save my life. I should then have done so, had not a sense of honor, in view of your recent indulgence and liberality in sending me abroad, and certain cherished projects for the welfare of the church, restrained me. I therefore chose to endure in silence what it could not profit any one to know. But I can no longer hope to satisfy my conscience in the discharge of my duties as a pastor, when life is a constant care and an almost constant pain; and when symptoms not to be mistaken threaten, if not the seat of life, what to me is more serious, the seat of thought. And what I feel I cannot do, I would not attempt to do; for I would not become a drag upon the church which God once appointed me to lead, nor a pensioner upon its bounty. Having worked with you in the energy of my youth, and again in the vigor of my prime, to free this church from debt, I could not endure the thought that through premature infirmity I might become a burden upon its treasury in my advancing years. I therefore retire with unquestioning acquiescence in the same divine call by which I came.

I dare not trust myself to speak of the sundering of ties, that, for more than a quarter of a century, have bound you to every thought and act of my life. My whole life in the ministry runs parallel with this church. At the very time when you were organized, in 1840, I began to preach in New Haven, then a youth of 21. Five years later, I was called to become your pastor. There are few left among you who remember with what feeble resources and against what social and sectarian opposition you had entered upon the experiment of establishing in New York a church of the Congregational order; how for years you worshiped in a hired house, which during the week was used for the most miscellaneous purposes; and how dependent you were upon the penny collection at every service, to eke out your scanty income.

Of personal embarrassments and sacrifices during your long struggle with poverty and debt, I have no desire to speak. These,

which are a willing contribution to our common work, are all forgotten in the joy of its abounding success. But that joy is heightened by the remembrance, that, by making the purchase of the Old Tabernacle by the Society a condition of accepting your call, and afterwards by suggesting a plan for the purchase of the Broadway entrance to that building, it was my good fortune to contribute in some measure toward that corporate strength which paved the way to your present material prosperity. And you, who began your existence as tenants in a secular building, and to whom the raising of twelve thousand dollars, by buying pews, toward the purchase of the Old Tabernacle was a great strain of faith and self-denial, it has been my privilege to see come forward with a liberality above all praise, and consecrate this house, without incumbrance, to the service of the Lord.

Whenever the encroachments of business and the increasing drain of removals shall compel you again to change your location, you will be able to command any position that shall seem best adapted to your future work. But you may safely leave that to time ; for the large and earnest congregations on Sabbath evenings, and the hopeful increase of the stated congregation by the addition of new families, and the return of former members to their cherished home, show that your work is not yet ended here. And the love and confidence with which you have sustained me in my work to this hour assure me, that, in the absence of a pastor, you will be held together even more strongly by the great interests committed to your trust. As you have upheld your pastor with undivided heart, so will you uphold the church with undivided hands.

But I would not exalt financial prosperity as a criterion of a successful church. While I have shared your satisfaction at every step in this direction, your spiritual growth has ever been my highest aim and joy. From your organization with 67 persons you have risen to an average membership of nearly 600. I have personally welcomed to the communion of this church 457 upon the first confession of their faith, and 900 by letter from other churches—a total of 1,357 additions since I came among you. Upwards of 1,700 persons have been in the communion of this church during the term of my pastorate. With

no one of these have I ever had a word of personal difference ; nor have differences upon questions of policy in the church at any time ranged themselves about the pastor as a party. Most devoutly do I bless God for this long ministry of peace ; and most heartily do I thank you for the Christian courtesy and kindness with which you have uniformly treated me. I remember also, with inexpressible emotions, the sainted dead with whom I here have walked in such loving communion.

As a pastor, it has been my endeavor to keep up such a personal acquaintance with the people of my charge as would enable me to sympathize with them in their joys and their sorrows. With a large and ever-changing congregation this has been no easy matter ; and if I have failed to meet the wishes of any in this respect, they may have the satisfaction of knowing that I have failed to meet my own ; and also that, however imperfectly this duty has been performed, it has been done impartially ; that to me all houses have been alike, and every person has had a claim equal to any other.

But the pulpit has ever been before me as the highest sphere of action in the service of Christ, and the central point of influence for your good. Seldom have I heard, never have I done, anything that could approach my own ideal of preaching as the unfolding of God in Christ—so high, so deep, so broad, so grand—for the edification of his church in truth and holiness. When I think how many words have been uttered from this pulpit in all these years, and how feeble these all have been in the comprehension and expression of the “glorious gospel of the blessed God,” I might even beg to be relieved of a responsibility so overpowering and so perilous. This only will I say, that, according to the ability that God has given me, I have studied to know and speak his truth.

The influence of this church upon public affairs, and for the cause of Christ throughout our land and in other lands, it is impossible to compute ; yet, whatever service the universal church has required of one in my position, has always been made secondary and tributary to my preparation for this pulpit, the demands of which I have felt to be so high and so noble.

The work of these years, with all its imperfections, I commit

to the mercy of Him who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.

For you who have so kindly regarded me as your teacher, I have only loving and grateful memories, and prayerful wishes of good. As your spiritual increase has been my constant labor, so in my retirement will it be my constant prayer and hope. May the great Head of the Church give to my successor fruits of his ministry among you, tenfold greater than He has so mercifully given unto me.

In leaving you, I have in view no other field and no definite future. The same cause which compels my resignation debars me from all manual labor, and from any mode of life requiring constant mental pressure or producing mental excitement. I shall hope to do something by the pen for the illustration and defense of the word of God. If spared for such a work, I shall have the solace and the joy of knowing that I am still laboring in the cause to which my life has been consecrated; and if not permitted even this, I yet shall have the solace and the joy of having consecrated my life to such a cause in the service of such a Master. To Him, with prayer and thanksgiving, and with unutterable yearnings of affection, I now commend you, dear brethren and sisters in Christ; and unto Him be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!

Your grateful and loving Pastor.

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON.

NEW YORK, Oct. 23, 1871."

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After the reading of the letter, the pastor withdrew. Dr. Wm. M. Chamberlain and Dr. Wm. H. Thomson followed with short addresses, giving their professional opinion that the immediate retirement of Dr. Thompson from the pressure of pastoral cares was necessary in order to preserve his life for such forms of usefulness as he might still be capable of in the service of the Church.

Mr. John Gray, in an appropriate and feeling manner, referred to the warmth of affection which for nearly 27 years had

existed between pastor and people, and of the severe loss now sustained by the Church in the severing of these pastoral ties. He presented the following resolutions, which were cordially seconded by Deacon W. H. Smith, and unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, It appears from the paper just read by our pastor, that, by reason of physical disability, he is unable to continue his pulpit and parochial labors, therefore,

*Resolved*, That we sincerely sympathize with Dr. Thompson, under the trial that compels him to retire from his pastoral labors among us; and we recommend that the Church and Society immediately take measures to raise the sum of not less than thirty thousand dollars, to be presented to him, on or before the 27th anniversary of his installation as pastor of this church—viz., the 15th day of April next—as a testimonial of our affectionate regard.

*Resolved*, That a committee of five be appointed to carry into effect the foregoing resolution, and to bring the matter before the Society at the next annual meeting in November, for such action as may be necessary to complete the sum proposed to be raised.

The following gentlemen were elected as such committee: Caleb B. Knevals, Levi M. Bates, Marshall O. Roberts, Wm. Henry Smith, and John Gray.

It was proposed by Deacon Smith, that, in addition to this corporate provision, a voluntary subscription be taken at once, as a testimonial of love and affection to our retiring pastor, which was ably seconded by Brother Thos. S. Berry, and unanimously carried; and the sum of \$20,925 was at once subscribed.

As several members of the church and society were not present, the committee of five were requested to advise such of the action of the meeting, and give them an opportunity to subscribe to the fund.

On motion adjourned.

MARSHALL O. ROBERTS, *Chairman*.

LEONARD HAZELTINE, JR., *Secretary*.

THE  
PASTOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
OF THE  
TESTIMONIAL OF THE CONGREGATION,

*Read from the Pulpit on Sabbath Morning, October 29th.*

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“I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people ; in the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.” For I feel it to be a religious duty, as well as a personal privilege, here, upon the Lord’s Day and in the Lord’s house, and as in the face of all the world, with devout thanksgiving to Almighty God, and with overwhelming gratitude to you my People, to testify of the munificence—the *magnificence*—of the provision which you have made for my support and comfort to the end of my days. What am I ? or what is my work, that you should love and cherish me after this sort ? I receive your bounty with a humility as deep as the gratitude with which I acknowledge it.

I cannot appropriate it to myself as a personal favor, though your generosity has been pleased to convey it under that form. Not anything in me, but that which is in you, is honored and illustrated by this gift ;—your loving consideration for the office of pastor in the Church of Christ ; your generous appreciation of the ministry which Christ hath ordained ; your loyal consecration to Christ himself as the Head of the Church ;—these



are the sentiments which have found expression in a gift beyond precedent at once in its nobleness and in its tenderness. Not because I have lived among you for almost a generation, but because I have been your *pastor* ; not that I may live without temporal anxiety in the future, but that I may be enabled to devote such strength as God shall preserve to me unto His glory—for these highest, best of Christian motives, it is that you have so honored yourselves in honoring your now disabled and retiring servant. Already has the report of your action been read in all the churches of the land, showing that you estimate the office of pastor by a wealth of affection that figures cannot express, by a sentiment of honor that years cannot exhaust ; it has been read in all the colleges and seminaries of the land, teaching young men that the love and esteem of the church will more than compensate for whatever worldly prospects they may renounce in devoting themselves to the ministry ; it has been read in all business circles, reminding the world of the dignity and grace of Christian liberality ; it has gone beyond the sea, to furnish a new argument to those who are there contending that the voluntary affection of a Christian brotherhood is stronger and richer than the endowments of a State-Establishment. I bless God in you, for you, through you ; and I see in this your unanimous and spontaneous generosity toward your pastor, the pledge of your unanimity and heartiness of purpose in your future work.

Personally, I am greatly comforted that the secret trial which I had so long borne is at last shared by you, and is relieved by a love so sympathizing, so considerate, so abounding. It was no small part of the burden that, for your sakes, I felt bound to carry it alone. When one is called to contemplate the uprooting of his whole life, the sundering of the fondest ties, the imperiling of most cherished interests, affections, hopes, he must needs prepare himself for such an act by solitary communing with God. Whatever his secret griefs, before the world he ought to show a Christian faith and cheerfulness—enameled, it may be, by passing through hidden fires. Under such a visitation, no one can advise, no one can help him. He must make up his mind to accept and to do the will of the Father.

It was a great trial to me to feel that I must not reveal my purpose to my brethren until the moment for action had come. Had I done so, the air would have been filled with rumors and surmises, and I should have been overwhelmed with personal inquiries and discussions. Better far was the counsel of the Psalmist, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and *be still.*" But when the judgment of physicians peremptorily confirmed my own forebodings, I threw myself upon the confidence and magnanimity of a people among whom I never have discriminated, and never could discriminate, in my relation as pastor of each and all alike ; and the rallying of your affectionate sympathy under this impartial trust is the expression and the pledge of your deep, hearty, and abiding unity in the work of Christ.

And now, dear brethren and friends, I have to force down my heart by power of will, lest, in attempting to tell you how I thank you and how I love you, I should appear too weak before you. Henceforth, whatever work I do, whatever comfort I have, whatever memory I cherish, whatever joy I feel, will be indissolubly linked to you. My very life, for Christ's work, will be your gift. And if, for the illustration of God's providence and word, I shall go down into Egypt, it will be because my brethren have lifted me out of the pit, and put me in bonds and sent me there ; but these will be bonds of love and of gratitude that shall hold me to you while life shall last, and shall draw me to you as my home-circle in the Father's house.

May God supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus ; and unto God and our Father be glory for ever. Amen."

## MEETING OF THE CHURCH.

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At a meeting of the Broadway Tabernacle Church held on Wednesday evening, Nov. 1st, 1871, the communication of the pastor, Rev. Joseph P. Thompson, D.D., resigning his office was read,\* together with the minutes of the informal meeting of the Church and Society held on the 23d of October.

And the following resolutions were passed, after appropriate, and heartfelt remarks from many of the members:

WHEREAS, Our pastor, Rev. Joseph P. Thompson, D. D., has by his communication dated October 23d, 1871, resigned his office as pastor, and requested us to unite with him in calling a Council to conclude the dissolution of the pastoral relation :—

*Resolved*, That with deep regret we recognize the imperative nature of the reasons which have led to this step, and that we hereby accept the resignation, and will unite with him in calling a Council as requested.

*Resolved*, That a committee of five be appointed to act with him in calling the Council.

*Resolved*, That with affectionate gratitude to him, and with reverent thanksgiving to Almighty God, we recognize the eminent usefulness of Dr. Thompson's labors for more than a quarter of a century, for the growth, prosperity, and spiritual life of this Church and Society, for the advancement of sound learning and Christian morality in the community, for the cause of liberty and free government in the nation, and for the spread of the gospel throughout the world; while he has been to us an able and earnest minister of the Word, an affectionate and faithful pastor, and a kind and constant friend. And we pray that his health may soon be restored by repose, and that he and his beloved household may ever enjoy the richest blessings of Divine favor.

\* See page 12.

The following members of the Church were constituted a committee in accordance with the foregoing resolutions :

Austin Abbott,	Henry Whittelsey,
Caleb B. Knevals,	T. S. Berry,
Leonard Hazeltine, Jr.	

The committee appointed by the Church issued the following

LETTER MISSIVE.

NEW YORK, Nov. 2d, 1871.

The Broadway Tabernacle Church to the ——— Church sendeth greeting.

*Dear Brethren:*

WHEREAS, By reason of failing health, Rev. Joseph P. Thompson, D. D., has resigned the office of pastor in this Church, and the Church has accepted his resignation, we therefore affectionately invite your attendance, by your pastor and a delegate, at a Council for the purpose of dissolving this relation. The Council will meet in the chapel of the Broadway Tabernacle Church, on Wednesday, November 8th, at 2 P. M.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, we are your brethren in Christ,

AUSTIN ABBOTT, HENRY WHITTELSEY, CALEB B. KNEVALS, THOMAS S. BERRY. LEONARD HAZELTINE, JR.,	}	<i>Committee of the Church.</i>
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I cordially concur in the above invitation,

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, *Pastor.*

## MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

CALLED ON OCCASION OF THE

### RESIGNATION OF REV. J. P. THOMPSON, D. D.

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In accordance with Letters Missive from the Broadway Tabernacle church, New York, an Ecclesiastical Council convened in the chapel of that church on Wednesday, November 8th, 1871, at 2 o'clock P. M.

There were present as members of the Council, from the New England Cong. Church, Rev. Merrill Richardson, D. D., Pastor ; Dr. H. C. Houghton, Delegate. Harlem Cong. Church, Dea. Geo. H. White, Del. Church of the Pilgrims, Brooklyn, Dea. R. P. Buck, Del. Clinton-Avenue Cong. Church, Rev. W. I. Budington, D. D., Pastor ; Dea. W. W. Fessenden, Del. Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Bro. W. E. Caldwell, Del. Central Cong. Church, Brooklyn, Dea. W. C. Hickok, Del. Central Cong. Church, Philadelphia ; Bro. J. B. Shepard, Del. First Cong. Church, Orange Valley, N. J., Rev. G. B. Bacon, Pastor. First Church, New Haven, Ct., Rev. Geo. L. Walker, D. D., Pastor ; Bro. Eli Whitney, Del. First Cong. Church, Newark, N. J., Rev. W. B. Brown, D. D., Pastor. First Cong. Church, Jersey City, Rev. G. Buckingham Willcox, Pastor ; also, Rev. Drs. Leonard Bacon, Joshua Leavitt, Ray Palmer, Benjamin N. Martin, and Rev. E. W. Gilman.

The Council was organized by the election of Rev. Dr. Bacon as moderator, and Rev. G. Buckingham Willcox as scribe.

Prayer was offered by the moderator.

The resignation by Rev. Dr. Thompson of his pastorate over the Broadway Tabernacle church, with the action of the church accepting the same, was read by Bro. Austin Abbott.

Dr. Thompson offered remarks setting forth more fully the failure of health which had necessitated his resignation.

On motion, it was voted that the Council is satisfied of the propriety of the resignation of Dr. Thompson, and of the acceptance thereof by the church ; and that we advise that such resignation take effect on the 15th of November, 1871.

A committee was appointed, consisting of Rev. Drs. Bacon, Budington, and Leavitt, and Bro. R. P. Buck, who reported as follows :

The Council, in coming to this result, desire to express, first, their recognition of God's will, in the painful affliction which brings to a close a ministry so useful, not only to this church, but in wider relations.

In behalf of the churches of Christ, we offer to this church the assurance of our sympathy with them in their bereavement, and of our appreciation of the unexampled munificence with which the members of the church and society have testified their grateful affection toward their pastor.

We recognize, with thankfulness to the Great Head of the Church, the singular union that for more than a quarter of a century has subsisted between pastor and people, and believe that such an example will tend to promote the honor and efficiency of our churches.

With profound respect, and with tender sentiments of fraternal love, we commend the retiring pastor to the churches of Christ everywhere, as a brother faithful and beloved, "who has good report of all men, and of the truth itself."

The Council cherish the strong hope, that Dr. Thompson, released from pastoral cares and duties, will find himself able, in the good providence of God, to prosecute those studies, in Biblical antiquities, and especially in Egyptology, in which he has already so honorably distinguished himself ; and which, in the present state of Biblical science, are so much needed for the defense of the faith of Christ's Church.

On motion, this report was accepted and adopted as the result of Council.

Expressions of personal regard and affection were offered by Rev. Drs. Budington, Palmer, Leavitt, Martin, and by the moderator, followed by Rev. Dr. Edward Beecher.

By vote of the Council, Dr. Thompson, having previously retired, was invited to listen to the foregoing result.

And after remarks responsive by Dr. Thompson, the Council adjourned without day.

G. BUCKINGHAM WILLCOX, *Scribe*.

ACTION  
OF THE  
NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN ASSOCIATION.

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Resolutions adopted unanimously by the New York and Brooklyn Association, in conference with Bedford Congregational Church, Nov. 1st, 1871, on motion of Rev. Wm. Ives Budington, D. D.:

WHEREAS, The Rev. J. P. Thompson, D. D., has resigned his pastoral office in the Tabernacle church of New York, the Association of New York and Brooklyn, meeting in conference with the Bedford Congregational Church, cannot allow this event to take place without expressing their deep regret that his health has made this step necessary, and their personal and general sense of the loss which our churches sustain by his departure from us; therefore,

*Resolved*, That this Association acknowledges with grateful recognition his long-continued and valuable services in the support and vindication of our Congregational Christianity in the days of its weakness and infancy here, and attributes much of its present extension and influence to his indefatigable labors in its behalf.

*Resolved, secondly*, That in the conscientious studies which have enlarged our Christian literature, in the particular labor which contributed to the support of our nation's life in its great conflict, and in the earnest discussions which vindicated the cause of Freedom against Slavery in the past, Dr. Thompson bears among us a record and a remembrance honorable both to him and the cause of our Lord.

*Resolved, thirdly*, That, cherishing the most grateful recollections of Dr. Thompson's past connection with this Association, in which he has been a most efficient and fraternal member until compelled to resign his place by reason of failing health, we shall follow him to any future labors to which he may devote himself with heartfelt interest and earnest prayers for his usefulness and happiness.

*Resolved, fourthly*, That a copy of these resolutions, signed by the moderator and secretary, be sent to Dr. Thompson.

S. S. JOCELYN, *Moderator*.  
M. L. WILLISTON, *Secretary*.



## MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE.

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At the meeting of the Conference of Congregational Churches of New York, Brooklyn, and vicinity, held at the First Congregational Church, Jersey City, N. J., Nov. 9th, 1871, Rev. G. B. Bacon, Deacon S. Holmes, Rev. M. E. Strieby, and Dr. C. S. Mann, were appointed a committee to prepare a minute concerning the retirement of Rev. Dr. Joseph P. Thompson from his pastoral office, the same to be entered upon the records of the Conference. That the committee subsequently made the following report, which was unanimously adopted by the Conference.

This Conference, representing the Congregational churches of New York and Brooklyn and vicinity, desires to put upon its record the following minute :—

We have heard with sorrowful surprise and interest, through the public press, and again to-day, with deep emotion, from his own lips, the announcement of the disabilities which remove from active service in the pastoral office, and from participation in these familiar duties and privileges of Christian fellowship, our brother, long beloved and honored as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, and as a fellow-servant in these churches, the Rev. Joseph P. Thompson.

We make no attempt to recite, in this brief minute, the many and great public services of Dr. Thompson in his ministry of more than thirty years ; nor to commemorate the conspicuous fidelity with which, for more than a quarter of a century, he has filled the responsible pastorate of the Broadway Tabernacle Church in New York city. These things are matters of history,

widely known and commended, and they have received most fit and faithful witness in the generous action by which his church and people have expressed their love and sympathy for him, and made provision for his remaining years.

But the influence and usefulness of Dr. Thompson have not been limited by the duties of his pastorate. Through the public press and in public assemblies, by voice and pen, the churches of our faith and order have felt and recognized his leadership. The nation, in its hour of extremest peril, the Christian soldiers who went forth from our homes and from our sanctuaries to the fatigues and perils of the conflict, have abundant reason to remember, and do gratefully recall, his words of cheer and courage, his unfailing sympathy and help, his personal ministry among the sick and wounded,—and that yet greater gift which God required of him—in the bearing of that common burden in that dark and awful hour. The Christian world has been his debtor for the learning and labor which he has brought to the interpretation and illustration of the Holy Scriptures, and to the practical enforcement of the truth of God.

But we in these churches and in this Conference make mention especially of the loss which we are suffering by his removal from our councils, and from personal participation in our fellowship. For these many years, we have been used to look to him as not only the Bishop of our Metropolitan Church, but as also, and, therefore, by right of position, and by right of his singular gifts and abilities, our chief counselor in matters concerning the welfare of the churches. During these years in which the church, under his pastorate, has grown to be *mater et caput ecclesiarum* (mother and head of churches) in this metropolitan region, no face has been more familiar in our meetings than his. We have found in him a strong and able leader, a wise and faithful counselor, a generous and sympathizing friend. We testify our sense of the debt which we owe him for his fidelity to the great fact and principle so vital to our polity, so essential to our congregational order—the fellowship of the churches.

And now that, in the providence of God, to which we bow with sorrowing resignation, he is taken from us for a season, and disabled for the duties which he has so long, and with such

conspicuous fidelity fulfilled, we express to him our loving sympathy, our deep and prayerful wish for his increasing peace. Into such labors as the providence of God may yet make possible for him, we follow him with confidence and hope ; and we pray that in infirmities, in absence, in solitude, the knowledge of the grateful love and reverence of us, his brethren in Christ, may be to him a strength and solace, and that the presence of the Lord, whom he has loved and served, may be his constant joy and everlasting reward.

Attest :

WM. IVES BUDINGTON, *Moderator*.

H. H. McFARLAND, *Secretary*.

Jersey City, N. J., Nov. 9th, 1871.

THE

# BROADWAY TABERNACLE CHURCH:

## A Historical Discourse,

*Preached Nov. 12th, 1871,*

BY JOSEPH P. THOMPSON.

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Events, not years, make history. Ideas evolved or wrought into action, discoveries and inventions made, principles and institutions established, deeds accomplished, results achieved—these are the woof that History weaves into the ever-winding threads of Time,—now packing it with all figures and colors within the short space of years, and again scattering the patterns, with hardly a perceptible order or relation, along the line of centuries. Ours is a period when the shuttle flies swiftly, when the figures are bold, and the colors massed and strong. History is made almost faster than we can read it. Events are crowded together, and rolled up to make room for others that at once distract our attention; the retina becomes a kaleidoscope of forms and colors, the memory a jumble of incidents. To gain the impression of history, the effect of relation, continuity, progress, we must pause now and then, unwind the cylinder, and study the ideas, events, principles, movements, which have made their mark. This church, though it has not quite rounded up the years of a generation, has already a history of its own; and has shared in some of the leading:

movements and events, civil and ecclesiastical, that will make forever memorable the history of these recent times. If, therefore, I would recall to you the principles of church order, the movements of reform, the enterprises of benevolence, the measures of patriotism, of humanity, and of progress, with which this church has been identified, it is that in this parting hour we may together honor God for the work to which he has called us ; may confirm our own faith and love and joy as co-workers with God in such a field at such a time ; may garner memories and hopes that shall cement our spiritual and eternal union, after the dissolution of official, and even of all earthly ties ; and may proclaim to those who shall come after us, the spirit, the principles, and the privileges to which they are pledged by such a history. I marvel that, in the prime of life, I find myself in a position to speak from memory of so many and important movements and events ; that thirty-one years in the ministry—nearly twenty-seven of them in this church—have made me a witness of so many things worth telling of, as if they were already old or forgotten. I am startled at the rapidity of local changes, when I remember that of the 363 persons who composed this church at the time of my settlement, only 21 now have their names upon its roll, and there remain to-day in its active membership but 8 brethren who were here when I was installed. Of the Congregational communion in New York, Brooklyn, and vicinity, this is the mother church, and I am the senior pastor ; and among all the churches of every communion in the city of New York, there remain in the full discharge of the pastoral office only eight\* ministers who were here when I came to this church. This whirl of change causes one to seem to die before his time. Yet this is not a thought of sadness, but of confidence ; for it reminds us that the true life is in institutions, not in individuals ; that in the body of Christ, as in the human body, there is a constant flux of particles ; men are but molecules, and the indwelling spirit of God appropriates to this living body new elements and

\* Rev. Drs. Adams and Burchard, of the Presbyterian Church ; Rev. Dr. Hutton, of the Reformed ; Rev. Dr. Bellows, of the Unitarian ; Rev. Drs. Haight, Price, Tyng, and Verren, of the Episcopal.

powers, and fills it with new inspirations and activities, so that it groweth more and more.

What this church has been and has accomplished, what this church shall be and shall do in the future, is not primarily a question of *men* in its offices or in its constituency ; but is answered by the measure in which it is a spiritual body vitalized by the Spirit of Christ. And the evidences of this in its past history may serve as a ground of encouragement and hope, and also as a rule of guidance, for its future work.

I. This church has illustrated the capacity of the local church for self-government, with unity, wisdom, and efficiency. It had its origin in the assertion of that principle which we regard as the fundamental law of the New Testament touching the church as a visible organization ;—that a church properly consists of persons spiritually renewed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ; that these believers, in virtue of their personal union with Christ, have equal privileges in His kingdom ; that, being associated under a covenant for the worship and the service of God according to His holy word, they constitute a church, complete in itself, competent to choose its own officers, to observe the sacraments of the gospel, to administer discipline, to plan and carry forward all manner of Christian work. “ Every such church is independent of any outward jurisdiction or control, whether from popes, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, or other persons assuming to be Christ’s officials ; from general conventions, conferences, or assemblies ; from synods and presbyteries ; and from associations, councils, or other courts or convocations ; or from other churches ; being answerable directly and only to Christ, its head.”\* It is this autonomy of the local church which distinguishes this church, as to the form of its interior administration, from other communions of Christians with which in doctrine, spirit, and work it is in vital accord. At the time of its organization, certain local circumstances, and the general condition and tendency of ecclesiastical affairs in this community, seemed to call for a renewed assertion of the privileges and functions of the Christian brotherhood. And now that the

\* For a clear and forcible statement of the New-Testament doctrine concerning the church, see “ Congregationalism,” by Rev. H. M. Dexter, D. D.

controversies and jealousies of those early days, which should never have been, have passed away, I think it will be admitted that this church has set a good example in minding its own affairs ; that it has never agitated the Christian public with disputes about its doctrine, its discipline, its order, or its worship ; but has shown that one way of maintaining the unity and peace of Christ's Church—and a very simple and good way—is to let every church have its own way.

It is one thing to assert a principle and another to illustrate it ; and principles in practice are weightier far than professions upon paper. To proclaim the equality of the brotherhood, to contend for the independence of the Church, were nothing without the illustration of such equality and independence in preserving its harmony and promoting efficiency. I am happy to testify, from the experience of almost twenty seven years, that this church, though no freer than other churches from those human elements which are insoluble except by the grace of God, has worked with a measure of unanimity, of wisdom, and of devotion as high at least as is attained under any more stringent form of ecclesiastical organization. Liberty of discussion has conduced to harmony of action ; and freedom of action has favored unity of purpose, and given force to combination.

In its beginning, this church received the impress of intellectual freedom and of spiritual fervor from two men who were each in their way among the most remarkable men that I have ever known. David Hale would have gone to the stake for the right to speak ; Samuel Pitts would have transformed the fires of martyrdom into a seraphic column of prayer. When a question came up in the Church, Hale would talk it out, and Pitts would pray it out ; and if it provoked controversy and threatened division, Pitts with an irresistible fervor of devotion would pray it down, and Hale with a magnanimity of concession that marked his real strength would give it up ! These twin spirits shaped our history. Of course, there have been differences, sometimes of policy, sometimes personal, and even partisan ; but these have always been adjusted with little friction and without disruption. The principle of the equal and independent administration of affairs by the brotherhood has been tested by every experience

possible to a Christian Church :—by the sudden death of men designated by nature and by grace to be pillars ; by cases of discipline that appealed strongly to the feelings ; by proposed changes in the articles of faith, and in the details of worship ; by a change of location, and the intermediate state of migration from the old house to the new ; by the burden of debt, and by the pride of prosperity ; and through all these experiences, the unanimity, the practical wisdom, and the co-operative efficiency of the Brotherhood have justified the principle of self-government. How nobly, how unitedly, how tenderly, how lovingly this church has borne itself, in view of the sundering of the pastoral tie that to night must be severed forever, I am only too proud and thankful that all the world should know !

II. Equally important has been the work of this church in furthering the communion of churches of its own order—especially between New England and the West—and in developing the vital coherence of the Congregational body throughout the land. The independence of the local church in matters of government is counterpoised by the fellowship of the churches in matters of faith and practice of common concernment. No careful reader of the New Testament can fail to be impressed by these two facts as constituting the method and adaptation of Christianity as a working system—the *intense personality* or *individualism* of the gospel, in its instructions, addresses, and promises ; and the *spiritual oneness* and the *moral* co-operation of all who accept it. It is the beauty of Congregationalism, that it combines in their just proportions these two features or elements of the embodied Christianity of the New Testament. Wherever organic unity is placed first in order, the source of vital power in the organization itself is wanting ; for the vital power resides not in the ecclesiastical system, but in the individual souls who compose the organization, and who make it vital through their personal union with Christ by his Spirit. Out of this individual, personal union with and resemblance to Christ arises the moral affinity of all true believers, which draws them together in associations for his service and glory, and combines them for more efficient action. And as among the individual members of the local church, so in the relation of churches to



one another, the recognized independence and equality of each favors the fraternity of all. They co-operate and cohere, not through the bands of an ecclesiastical system controlling or compressing them, but through moral affinities, and the organic principles of life and love which they derive in common from Christ, their Head. "The independence of the local church, on the one side, and, on the other, the mutual friendship and helpful co-working of all local churches," have been aptly styled "the two foci of an ellipse," which maintain our communion in the integrity of its several parts, and in harmony of adjustment and unity of spirit and of purpose, alike in the neighborhood, the county, the State, and in the widest sphere of national life.

Sometimes, however, the influence of one of these centers seems to preponderate over the other, disturbing the balance of the system. Thirty years ago, the tendency in New England was toward a more compact and exclusive administration of Church-polity; while at the West the tendency was rather toward an erratic independency. The middle ground of New York State, which, by right of pre-emption, should have been largely Congregational, was occupied, so far as our communion was concerned, by churches which, under a "Plan of Union," had allied themselves to another ecclesiastical system, and had largely disused, if they had not forfeited, their original right to self-government. The organization of this Church was the beginning of a movement which led to the recovery of many of these churches to their primitive constitution, and to the recognition of the church-polity of the Pilgrim Fathers as national in its adaptation and extent. Here, in this metropolis of the nation, in what was then its most conspicuous public building—the resort of strangers from all parts of the country—was established a church which commanded the confidence of the churches of New England by its steadfast adherence to the faith and order of the Fathers, and at the same time attracted the sympathy of the Western churches by its spirit of independence and its zeal for progress. It is not too much to claim that this church, and the movement of which it was the nucleus, was the medium of fusing the old and the new, and of bringing the

churches of the East and the West to the consciousness of a national life. It was the pastor of this church who drafted the organization of the Association of New York and Brooklyn, which brought the infant churches of this vicinity into vital communion ; who proposed the establishment, and for years assisted in the conduct, of a weekly journal, which did so much to assert the power and to aid the progress of the principle of liberty in Church and State ; who, in the General Association of the State, exposed the unequal and injurious working of the so-called " Plan of Union," and moved its discontinuance—for peace with a sister denomination, as well as for the progress of our own ; and, again, it was the pastor of this church who, as chairman of a committee of the New York General Association, prepared the call and constructed the plan for that great " Convention of Ministers and Delegates of Congregational Churches in the United States," which met at Albany in 1852, and which was the first step toward the unification of the Congregational body throughout the country.

This series of measures, representing the spirit of this church, gave to it a national reputation for leadership in its own communion ; and because of its cordial and comprehensive spirit in all things pertaining to the welfare of that communion, as well as on account of its geographical location, it has been the chosen center for meetings and movements which concerned the whole Congregational body. The American Congregational Union was formed at the Old Tabernacle ; and within these walls, at the call of a committee of the Union, composed of members of this church, assembled, in 1864, the preliminary conference which convened the great National Council at Boston, in 1865. Here also met, in 1870, the national delegation which planned for the Jubilee of the Pilgrims, by commemorative services at Chicago, at Boston, at Plymouth, and by concerted preaching and contributions all over the United States. May this church never become so absorbed in caring for its own affairs as to recede from that position of national preferment, in respect of the principles and the progress of its own communion, to which it has attained by fidelity in upholding, and by generosity in giving.

III. Standing upon this platform of governmental independ-

ence and of spiritual communion, this church, by its teaching, its example, and its co-operative action, has cordially illustrated and promoted the unity of the church universal. This is a *Congregational* Church ; but this name has never been with it a war-cry on the battle-field of sects ; it is simply a term of convenience, to express the fact that all ecclesiastical power resides in the congregation of believers associated by covenant in one church-brotherhood. The name “ Congregational ” does not once occur in the title of this church, in its articles, or in its rules. Its corporate title was derived from the Old Tabernacle in which it began its worship ; but its Christian name is simply and solely—a church of Jesus Christ. The idea that an association or a community of believers, for the expression of Christian faith, the observance of Christian worship and sacraments, and the maintenance of Christian fellowship and work, constitutes a church of Christ, without regard to its modes of ecclesiastical administration,—this fundamental principle in its own platform causes this church to recognize and to fellowship all other communions of believers that are constituted upon the declaration of faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In order to this fellowship, no modification or concession of its principles is required ; it waives no peculiarities, enters into no stipulations, contracts no alliances ; its platform is the freedom of believers in Christ to associate themselves under Him ; the equality of all churches and communions as toward one another ; and the unity of them all in Christ, their Head. For this church to question the title of any other, because of its ecclesiastical constitution—whether as hierarchical as that of the Latin and the Eastern churches ; or as informal as that of the Plymouth Brethren and the Society of Friends—for this church to dispute the validity of ordination and of sacraments in any other, because administered through a bishop, a classis, or a presbytery, would be to deny the foundation upon which itself is constituted—that every body of believers, organized in the faith of Christ and for the work of Christ, is a church competent and authorized to appoint officers, conduct worship, and administer sacraments in its own way. This Church does not insist that others shall come upon its ecclesiastical platform as a condition of fellow-

ship; it does not propose to construct a new platform, upon which different churches can meet together; it goes forth in this spirit of Christ to meet all communions upon its own platform, which underlies them all: it insists upon recognizing them as churches in all things equal to itself. I do not know that there exists another church of any communion which has laid down, as the first article of its creed, a declaration like that which opens the Confession of Faith of the Broadway Tabernacle Church:—"As a Church of Jesus Christ, associated in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament, for the public worship of God, for the observance of gospel sacraments and ordinances, for mutual edification and encouragement in the Christian life, and for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, *we declare our union in faith and love with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Upon this basis, what glorious meetings have been held within these walls, directly for the furtherance of Christian union, or under the inspiration of its spirit, for the advancement of our common Christianity! How the noble eloquence of Hitchcock, Duryea, and Tyng has here resounded—the latter once calling this "*Liberty-corner*;" how the mellifluous voice of Bishop Janes, leading our devotions, has drawn forth our fervid amens; how the venerable patriarch of St. Luke's Hospital, and the stately rector of Trinity, have here found utterance for their opposite theories of apostolical succession and sacramental grace, while we made the responses of their accustomed liturgy; and how memorable was that field-night, when Vermilye and Vinton and Armitage here held high tournament for Christian union, "provoking one another unto love," while your pastor awarded the prizes impartially to each!

May this pulpit never be desecrated by sectarian utterances. May no ambassador of the faith, be he a Hyacinthe,\* a Peabody,

\* The following note is inserted here to illustrate the spirit in which the pastor would express Christian fellowship:

REV FATHER HYACINTHE:

SIR:—Believing that many of your countrymen in New York would be glad to hear the gospel at your eloquent lips, I am happy to place the central and commodious church known as the Broadway Tabernacle at your disposal for preaching a service in French, on any Sunday afternoon or evening. This

or a Gurney, ever be debarred from it by reason of his church or no-church connection ; if only he have the faith and the spirit of Christ. May this pulpit ever faithfully represent the first article of the Faith of the Church ; that through fidelity to the polity by which we have prospered, it may be liberal and loving toward the Holy Church Universal—showing that to be independent is to be united, that to be Congregational is to be Catholic.

IV. From the ecclesiastical position and influence of this church, we turn to its relations to society and the State, upon the momentous questions of political and social ethics which have agitated our recent times. No church in the land was more fully identified with the great moral conflict with slavery for the twenty years preceding Mr. Lincoln's decree of emancipation. From its earliest utterances to its latest, this pulpit has been sustained by the sentiment of the church in denouncing slavery as a crime against God and man. Again and again have such utterances been called for by the church, for a wider circulation through the press.

Twenty-five years ago, the slave-power began that series of aggressions upon the constitutional compacts and the traditional liberties of the nation, which at length roused the conscience of the people for the issue of arms. Along that whole line of attack this church was in the field, resisting at every point of moral vantage, and rallying the community

invitation places the service under your direction, without condition or reservation. It is given as a tribute to your Christian manliness and truth, and your fidelity as a preacher of the gospel ; and in the name of that Catholicity which is above all divisions of the Church, of that charity which is broader than names or nations, of that liberty which you have so nobly illustrated and maintained, of that truth which you have so fearlessly proclaimed ; and, finally, in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the Supreme Head of the Church Catholic and Universal.

Accept the assurances of my profound esteem,

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, *Pastor.*

*New York*, 29th Oct., 1869.

To this Father Hyacinthe replied that the delicacy of his relations to his own Church rendered it inexpedient for him to exercise his priestly functions at that time ; but should he preach at all in New York, he would certainly accept an invitation so free and so fraternal.

to the defense of justice and humanity. In 1848, when the attempt was made to force slavery into territory before consecrated to freedom, the appeal to Christian men "to do their utmost to defeat that great wickedness" was carried by you to the polls, and made to tell upon the action of political parties. In September, 1850, when Congress passed that most infamous act of modern legislation, the Fugitive-Slave law, you upheld your pulpit in asserting the higher law of Christ, which made that act a nullity before the bar of conscience. The declaration, "the fugitive shall not be surrendered; he shall have protection; he shall have bread; he shall have money; he shall have shelter, though at the penalty of imprisonment for his sake; obedience to such a law is crime; we stand upon the brotherhood of the race redeemed by Christ; and take our high appeal to the word and the throne of God;"—that declaration of the gospel of humanity met an enthusiastic response from the vast congregation of the Tabernacle; you demanded the discourse for repetition—for publication; and when its doctrine raised from press and platform and pulpit a storm of obloquy and abuse never exceeded; when a leading clergyman denounced it as treason, and a leading journal counseled you to "leave such a preacher to bare walls," to "strip him of his bread and butter," and "to roll his black coat in the mire," you rallied around your pastor with a zeal which multiplied his words a thousand-fold. For a time we stood almost alone in this community, in the fore-front of that battle;—the Congregational platform was my liberty, as it was your power. Representing no party, political or ecclesiastical, and no convention or society for the abolition of slavery, we held up to the conscience of the Christian community the sin of abetting the extension of slavery, the duty of exterminating it from every foot of soil under the national jurisdiction, and of putting it under the ban of Christian sentiment wherever we could not reach it by legislation or by vote. Ours was a religious crusade; its motto, "Christianity and slavery cannot live together."

Some utterances of those days now seem almost prophetic. As in 1856, it was said, "Slavery must go down; but this nation, like Rome, may first go down in the struggle. The

prayers and efforts of Christians alone can avert a catastrophe which the madness of rulers is hastening on." And in 1854, "It will be no marvel if our children see a prostrate commerce, a servile insurrection, or a civil war;" and as far back as 1851, when it was said, "Either Slavery must go down voluntarily, speedily, peaceably, under the moral influence of the gospel, or Slavery or Liberty will one day go down in blood." It was slavery that went down, and went down in blood—blood wrung from the heart of Liberty:—and when the first note of war sounded, this pulpit was of the very first voices in all the land to proclaim universal emancipation as the only possible solution of the struggle; and it did not cease to call for this measure as the one way to peace and national unity, until the final abolition of slavery summoned us to fill these arches with hallelujahs! The responses to this demand, which poured in from all parts of the country, showed how truly national was the influence of this church upon the questions of the hour.

As one agency in this moral warfare, this church sustained Oberlin College because of its justice to the black man; and it excluded from its list of charities those publishing and mission societies which had in any way connived at slavery or truckled to its power.

While carrying on this warfare, by its own weapons, with the real enemy of the country, this church was behind no other body, religious or secular, in patriotic zeal and sacrifice for the defense of the nation. From its congregation five and twenty enlisted in the army; five of these died in the service, of whom two were brought home to be buried lovingly from the bosom of the church. The Sanitary, Christian, and Union commissions had its constant and energetic support; the great Fairs were largely officered and equipped from the women of this congregation. By solemn vote and prayer you sent your pastor to minister in your name upon the battle-fields of Tennessee; and you greeted his return with fresh outpourings of your bounty for the soldiers; again and again you draped organ and pulpit with flags, and made this a rallying-ground for Liberty and Union under the uplifted banner of the cross; and when all was over you held within these walls a majestic requiem for three hundred thousand dead.

But there was one incident of the war which signalized the loyal devotion of this church to the country and to Christ. It was in that darkest hour when delays and defeats had so blighted hope that treason came out from its lurking-places in the North, and hissed its venom at the Government ; when the President hesitated either to enforce the draft or to call for volunteers; and when timid Conservatives began to say, " We had better give it up and make terms." Your pastor came into the pulpit with a plea for Christian manhood, saying : " Of what avail are our churches, if we shall no longer have a government or a country? Of what worth is our Christianity if it cannot preserve these? If the Government cannot save the country, let the churches save both. Let this church call for volunteers ; equip a regiment, and put it into the field, to show that *we* will never give it up." At the close of the service some one called upon the congregation to remain ; proposed a subscription for a church regiment; and before night of that memorable Sabbath, upwards of thirty thousand dollars were laid upon this altar. Two women sent me each five hundred dollars, saying, " We cannot go; put men in our stead." That action went like a flash of electricity through the land ; it brought letters of thanks from Senators at Washington, from members of the Cabinet, from generals in the field. It cheered the burdened heart of the President, and gave new courage to his indomitable Minister of War. Though the immediate action of the Government superseded this new recruiting office, yet the spontaneous and magnanimous act of that day will forever stand as the proudest memento of our Christian patriotism.

The war ended, and the great organic sin of the nation wiped out, this church, feeling its responsibility at a post so central and commanding, at once sounded the alarm of two dangers that seemed to threaten our peace, and that have since convulsed this city and commonwealth with the effort to shake them off:—Social luxury, begetting commercial and political corruption, and Romish sectarianism invading our common schools, perverting our public charities, and grasping at the offices of the State. Long before the press uttered one warning of these impending evils, or assemblies and conventions of citizens began to



take them in hand, this church lifted up its voice, cried aloud, and spared not, for the rescue of the city from vice, crime, and misrule, and for the preservation of religious liberty from the machinations of a political church. All that a church could do was here done to produce that public sentiment which has just triumphed so signally over political debauchery, and which is yet to triumph over sectarian audacity.

V. While the evils which the war engendered or brought to the surface thus aroused our moral antagonism, the openings it made for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, southward and westward, gave a new impulse to our charities. This church, which had so long labored and prayed for the emancipation of the slave, was forward to work and to give for the education of the freedman. This church, which had always cherished Home Missions as the chief agency of our national salvation, now gave to church-building and missionary evangelism a prominence proportionate to the new demands of the times. Since the war, it has given some thirty thousand dollars directly to these several forms of home missionary work. This mention of particular charities brings me to speak of the relations of this church to the progress of Christ's kingdom throughout the world. From its bosom have gone forth missionaries to Micronesia, to Bulgaria, to Asia Minor, and to Central Asia. It has had living representatives of its spirit and work in Italy, in Spain, and in Mexico; and brethren who have gone from it to new settlements in our own broad West, as ministers or as laymen, have reproduced its articles, its rules, and sometimes its name, in tabernacles in the wilderness. Missionaries from every quarter, either from some personal tie or local association, or by the atmosphere of the place, have been drawn to this church with a home feeling, and have met here a home welcome. What precious memories arise of Bridel, Dwight, Goodell, King, Lobdell, Perkins, Scudder, Stoddard, now gathered to the assembly of the just made perfect;—of Bushnell, Calhoun, Hamlin, Lindlay, Marsh, Schaufliker, Spaulding, Thomson, Walker, Wood, among the living, who have thrilled our hearts and quickened our faith with the recital of God's work in distant lands!

Especially has the church cherished the international sym-

pathies of the Christian faith. Twice has your pastor been a representative of the Congregational Communion before kindred bodies in England, Wales, France, and Italy; and how often has the courtesy shown to him in this capacity been reciprocated by you to the representatives of other nationalities! Here Waddington was introduced to the heirs of the Pilgrims' faith, with his wondrous story of the cost of that inheritance in the stripes and bonds and blood of the Fathers. Here Massie was welcomed as an ambassador of British Christians and philanthropists, with messages of peace. Here Monod was welcomed with like messages from brethren of France and Switzerland. Here Vaughan, who came with the greetings of the Congregational Union of England to our National Council, preached his last sermon; here Newman Hall rang that great bell of free salvation, whose echoes still vibrate in our ears. Here Hyacinthe has worshiped with us as your pastor's guest, confessing the same faith in love and unity. Here Schaff has preached to Germans in their own tongue, and Pilatte to Frenchmen in theirs. It was a brother of this church, converted here, who years ago began that work of Bible colportage which is now filling Spain with the word of God; and it was the wise, patient, and self-sacrificing labors, and the magnetizing personal influence of a deacon of this Church, seconded by a visit of your pastor to Spain, which organized upon sound and efficient principles the work of evangelization in that country, which has now been assumed by the American Board. In the home field, this church has fostered those institutions that give permanence to our Christian civilization—the church and the college. The theological seminaries at New Haven, at Oberlin, and at Oakland, California, have shared largely in its beneficence.

During the past twenty-six years, it has contributed to various objects of benevolence . . . . .	\$350,000
It has raised for sustaining its own worship . . . . .	233,000
Add to this toward the purchase of the Old Tabernacle, . . . . .	15,000
To cancel the debt on this house . . . . .	65,000
For repairs and improvements here . . . . .	15,000
	<hr/>
	\$678,000

Which the munificent provision for the retiring pas-

tor advances to more than . . . . . \$730,000

VI. Though I have spoken so much at large of the public and external work of this church, it is not that I would give to this the foremost place in its history. Not Congregationalism, nor Christian union, nor Christian patriotism, nor Christian missions, nor universal Philanthropy, conveys the best expression of its life and work. Rather must this be sought in its inner life and growth as a church of Christ, and in its local work of gathering souls into his kingdom. Its increase from 67 members to an average of nearly 600, the addition under this pastorate of 457 on confession of their faith, and 900 by letter—a total of 1,357—is but an imperfect numerical sign of a life and growth which cannot be expressed in terms. No stereotyped phrases of theology, no traditional forms of worship or of action, have cramped the development of its spiritual activity. It has grown from within by feeding upon the word of God. The great central truth of Christ crucified as the alone Saviour of our sinful race ; the divine origin of the way of redemption revealed in the Bible , its divine attestation through the life, the works, the teachings of the incarnate Son of God ; its divine application through the grace of the Holy Spirit ; the personality of religion in all the relations of the human spirit to kindred spirits, and to the divine ;—in one word, the living reality of God, of the Bible, of sin, of the Saviour, of regeneration and holiness, of the judgment and the future state of reward and punishment—this grand system of the doctrines of grace has been the source of the strength and growth of this church, and the inspiration of all its activity. But these doctrines have been presented with reference to the changing phases of society, to the facts and theories of science, the spirit of scholarly criticism, and the wants of the times. Educated mind has been represented in this congregation by an average of at least forty college graduates among its stated worshipers ; and yet the humblest and least favored have here found the gospel suited to their needs. In its use and application of divine truth, this has been a living church ; and as a living church, it has been a growing and a working church.

The Bible class for young men, always most ably taught, has been a nursery to the church for its prayer meetings and its mission work, a training school for the ministry and for every form of evangelistic labor; a home for strangers, a nucleus of social religious life. Sabbath schools and mission schools, efficiently appointed, have drawn out the activity of the church to such an extent that at one period—before city missions were reduced to their present system—there were no less than five mission schools officered almost entirely from our membership. At intervals, glorious revivals have cheered our hearts with large and precious ingatherings. Most memorable was that occasion, when, to aid your pastor, you invited dear blessed Father Finney to preach again in the house that was built for him at the first. Those months were memorable in the fruits of grace.

The sanctification of the church, and the conversion of sinners unto God, should be the absorbing, the untiring aim of the Christian ministry. To lead the whole membership of the church up to the highest point of Christian experience, both in enjoyment and in efficiency, and so to make the pulpit and the church a constant power for good upon society, bringing the masses under the saving influences of the gospel;—this is the noble calling of the pastor, and this the true conception of our polity. But who is sufficient for these things? The failure to work out these problems to their highest, best results has long oppressed me, and is the one burden of this parting hour. But while I am ashamed of the failure of my ministry, in respect to its own ideal of a pastor's work, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." This is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation;" and this church, guided by that wisdom, shall both witness that power, and wield it, for ye are co-workers with God. For this the church is ably officered, and its membership is in excellent drill. In the old Tabernacle, we did give the gospel to the masses, and bring the masses to the gospel; but this was to the prejudice of a stable congregation, which alone can sustain the ministry.\* Here, with such a congregation, we have endeav-

\* With an audience of 2,500, our receipts from pew-rents were only from \$1,500 to \$2,000, and about \$1,500 from collections. The rentings of the house supplemented our resources, but these prejudiced many against taking pews. We gave the gospel for years to young men, to strangers, and to the poor.

ored to reach the floating population by our free evening service ; but, with a limited success as compared with the first twelve years of my ministry among you.

I cannot doubt that the change which the providence of God has made imperative, the grace of God will prove to be also timely :—that new modes of argument, illustration, and appeal in presenting the same truths of the same gospel will bring new minds under its influence, and will so quicken the spirituality of the Church, that church piety shall become practical power in bringing multitudes to Christ, and to God, who only doeth wondrous things, shall be all the praise.

I count it the great privilege of my life, as it has been my constant joy, to have been identified with such a church in such a history ;—*identified*. I say, for all that God had given me, brain, muscle, heart, spirit, with all that study, observation, and experience could gather, has been wrought into the work of this church for now almost twenty-seven years. Indeed, I have had no life separate from the life of this church. All that I have gathered of knowledge, all that I have received of honors, has been unreservedly yours ; and all that you could bestow of confidence, sympathy, co-operation, and support, has been mine with unvarying, unabated affection to the end. That a ministry should be more blessed and more rewarding is hardly to be conceived ; that its close could be more beautiful and honorable in the reciprocity of love, is not possible. And yet, I leave such a ministry and such a people without one repining thought. Its imperfections, both of spirit and performance, are known to Him to whom these all have been confessed, and are committed to His mercy. Yet with the deepest consciousness that “ we are unprofitable servants,” if we have truly sought to do the work that God had given us to do, then may we, without repining, relinquish our work when the Master calls us from it. The work is everything : the instrument is nothing, only as he is made a partaker of the work. And the work of this church shall stand, for it is of God.

For a people who have approved themselves so capable and so worthy, I have no words of counsel or of exhortation ; my gratitude and love I have expressed in another place, as in the bosom

of a family ;—for this public place and this parting hour, there remain only words of thanksgiving, of hope, and of rejoicing. The topmost round of yonder tower is the foundation of a spire pictured in the original plan of the church two hundred feet above its present elevation. The men who built upon the rock a tower so broad and firm can build the spire soaring in majesty and beauty toward the sky. Even so, under the guiding hand of some master-builder appointed of God, I seem to see this spiritual building growing more vast and splendid upon these foundations laid in faith and cemented with love ; its pillars rising to loftier heights more and more majestic ; its arches springing with a sweep ; its towers growing toward the heavens, wrought of all manner of stones, and pealing forth the chimes with which the angels welcomed the Saviour of the world ; while within its walls are throngs of Pentecostal converts, aflame with the new fire of the Holy Ghost, and joining in adoration of the Lamb. No cathedral of the Old World could draw my eyes away from that so blessed vision. With this yearning hope, this prophetic prayer, this apostolic benediction, dear brethren, “I now commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” Amen.

## ACTION OF THE SOCIETY.

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At a meeting of the Broadway Tabernacle Society, held on the evening of the 14th November, 1871, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted :

WHEREAS, The Rev. Joseph P. Thompson, D. D., by reason of impaired health, has resigned his office as pastor of this church and society, after laboring among us almost twenty-seven years ; therefore,

*Resolved*, That the trustees of this society be, and are hereby directed, to pay to him, on or before the fifteenth day of April, 1872, the sum of thirty thousand dollars, (\$30,000)\* in consideration of services he has rendered to the society during the term of his pastorate.

*Resolved*, That we sincerely concur in the expressions of sorrow and sympathy, adopted at the informal meeting of the church and society on Monday, 23d ult., and at the meeting of the church on Wednesday, Nov. 1st ; and that in bidding farewell to our pastor, after so long, faithful, and prosperous a career in the service of the church and society, we tender to him the assurances of our best wishes and earnest prayers for the restoration of comfortable health, for long-continued life and happiness, and for his success and usefulness in those labors in the investigation and illustration of Scripture history which are now before him.

T. S. BERRY, *Moderator*.

C. B. KNEVALS, *Clerk*.

\* This appropriation of thirty thousand dollars, which represents the whole Congregation in its corporate capacity, is in addition to the personal subscription at the informal meeting [see p. 17.] which has since reached the sum of nearly twenty-five thousand dollars.

ADJOURNED MEETING  
OF THE  
BROADWAY TABERNACLE SOCIETY.

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At an adjourned meeting of the Broadway Tabernacle Society, held on the evening of Nov. 22d, the following letter from the retiring Pastor was read and ordered to be printed, together with the minutes of the Society above approved.

C. B. KNEVALS, *Clerk.*

*To the Broadway Tabernacle Society:*

MY DEAR AND HONORED FRIENDS—The expression of your “sorrow and sympathy” for me under the disabilities which have compelled my retirement from the pastoral office, and the assurance of your best wishes and earnest prayers for my future “health and happiness,” have so unnerved me by emotion, that I can hardly trust my pen—and I am sure I could *not* trust my voice—to convey to you my gratitude and devotion. Now that the strain under which I had so long labored, in the endeavor to be faithful to my post, is relaxed, I begin to realize how shattered and worthless I am. The necessity for the step which I have taken must be apparent to all. Every physician to whom I have stated my case reproves me for having so greatly exhausted that nervous vitality which is the condition of a healthy mind.

But I am more than compensated for the loss of physical vitality by the spiritual life which has been infused into me by



the love of my people. Was there ever before just such a parting between a pastor and his flock? All the tender and grateful tributes which Death is accustomed to call forth, it is permitted me to receive, and at the same time to enter upon a new life of hope.

The munificent provision you have made for my temporal support encourages me to look forward to the useful employment of my remaining life in a sphere kindred to that in which I have labored for more than thirty years. The Universal Church applauds your generosity, and I have poured out my thanksgiving into the ear of all the world. But it will be mine, year by year, and day by day, while life shall last, to cherish you in your gift, and to honor that by using it worthily in the service of Christ and of his Church. Though silenced myself, I may yet preach through others by contributing somewhat to their materials for illustrating and maintaining the truth of God's holy word; and whatever good I may do hereafter will be the fruit of your bounty.

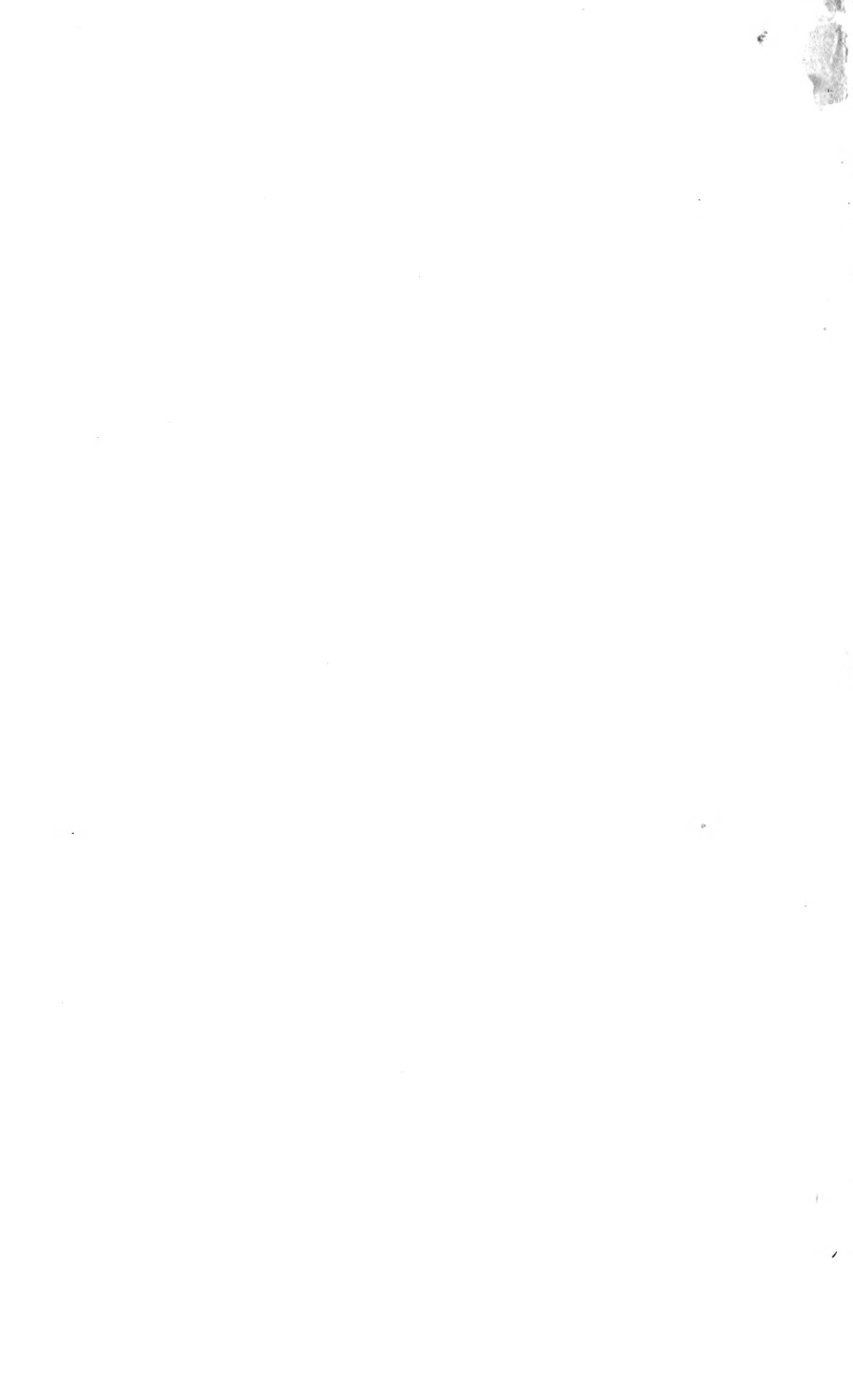
But while praising and blessing you for this, I am touched even more deeply with the sentiments of affection, respect, and sympathy with which you have so enriched and magnified your material benefaction. I thank you that you have been so considerate of my infirmities and failures, and so generous in my support. And I thank God for all the prosperity that He has given you, and pray that He may grant you, as a Society, increasing favor and usefulness, and may multiply to you, as individuals, all blessings, temporal and spiritual. Above all, may He soon send you a pastor worthy of your love, and of the great work to which he has appointed you.

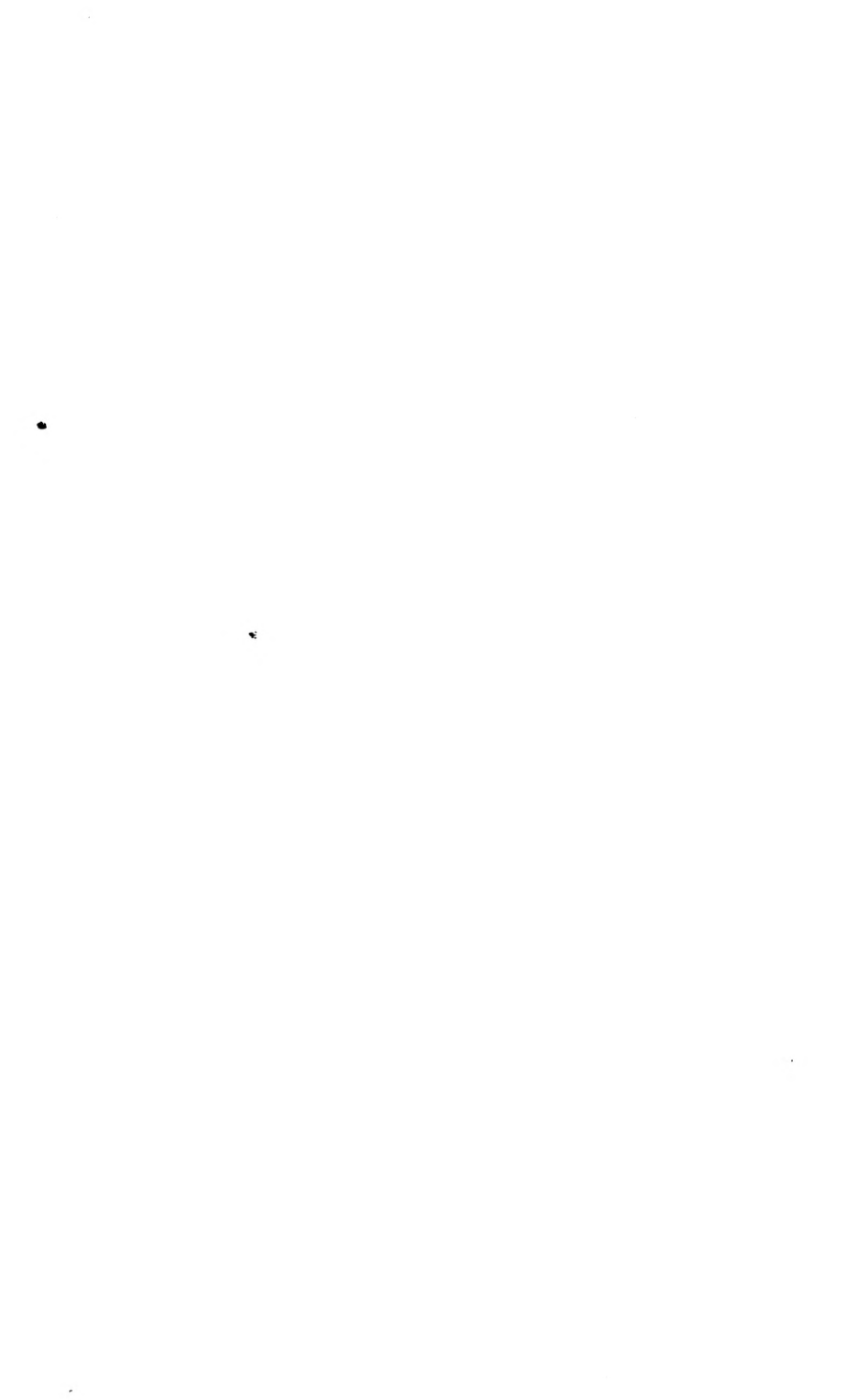
And now, in bidding farewell to my beloved people, I would recall the text of my first sermon—"I seek not yours, but *you*;" and, by all the love of this parting hour, would pray that I may meet you all in our Father's house, in everlasting joy.

Yours in the grateful bonds of Christian love,

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON.

Philadelphia, Nov. 18th, 1871.









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